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Madness in the NCAA

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The title “student athlete” holds a lot of weight at any university in the United States, especially when one plays basketball at Michigan State University, football at the University of Texas, or baseball at the University of Florida. These students are often put on a pedestal as they work hard to become the best athletes they can be, while also attempting to focus on their school work. Obviously, the school work comes first — the word student comes first, not athlete — but many of these students are taking to the gridiron or to a basketball court and performing in front of crowds of tens of thousands, making more money for their university and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) than many of them could imagine. These students are not paid by their universities, which is fair, as they should focus on being students and choosing universities that best suits their needs as both athletes and academics.

However, many student athletes are losing out on sponsorship opportunities with the current rules set in place by the NCAA. They often do not have the time to work a part-time job due to their need to focus on both their studies and their athletic commitments.

Instead the NCAA reaps the rewards of the hard work of student athletes, while also holding those same students from approaching any financial gain themselves, including regulating the use of the likenesses of student athletes. Student athletes cannot sell their likenesses to sponsors, such as Nike, Adidas, or Under Armour, meaning that they do not even have the right to profit off of their own name and image.

The current system in the NCAA is corrupt and the most recent NCAA scandal is a perfect example of the issue. Christian Dawkins, a former sports agent, has been accused of bribing many current basketball players at different universities, in an attempt to get them to pick a university that was in the best interests of him, the university, and the brands that Dawkins was associated with.

Let's take a look at the investigation into Miles Bridges and his mother, Cynthia. Miles, 19, is a basketball player at Michigan State University. He has followed the rules the NCAA has in place for its student athletes, but his name has been dragged through the mud recently in the current Christian Dawkins NCAA scandal. His mother, Cynthia, met with an agent and had a meal at the Redwood Lodge. The meal totaled \$70.05, but the agent had withdrawn \$400 from an ATM to pay for the meal. This created an issue, as the NCAA's rules do not allow for extra benefits to be given to student athletes or their families, so this lunch with an agent brought about a federal investigation into Miles Bridges' decision to attend Michigan State University.

The recent FBI investigations have mainly centered around Christian Dawkins, whose records indicate a long list of players that are and have been associated with him, many of which have allegedly taken money from the agent. On that list is Miles Bridges and his mother who are reported to have taken \$400 from the agent. Other players on that list, such as DeAndre Ayton from the University of Arizona, reportedly took \$100,000. The University of Texas' own Eric Davis, Jr. had his season abruptly end after being associated with Dawkins, accused of taking \$1500 from the agent.

The actions of Dawkins are widely seen to be unethical, as he was actively working against the rules of the NCAA, but they do point to some of the systematic failures of the system imposed by the NCAA. First, that people like Dawkins are even allowed to associate with athletes at different colleges presents an issue to the system the NCAA has in place. More importantly, student athletes receive no payment for their time playing, yet can find themselves in legal trouble if they even accept certain offers to have dinner with agents, or even recruiters for universities that they are considering.

The NCAA makes almost one billion dollars a year off of the March Madness tournament alone, and the players performing in the games see none of that money, but rather just receive scholarships to play for a university they may only be at for one year before turning to the NBA, though the one and done rule may be gone soon.

The NBA's one and done rule has allowed the NCAA to use student athletes that are already prepared to be professional athletes on a one year lease. These students attend a university for one year and then declare for the NBA draft, with no intention of learning anything in their time at the university.

For example, the University of North Carolina's sport program got into trouble a few years ago because their students athletes had been taking "paper" courses. Many of these student athletes were reading between a 4th and 8th grade reading level.

The Texas Orator recently posted a twitter poll asking its followers their opinions on students athletes, asking "Should student athletes be allowed to profit off of their names and images via sponsorship?" The poll received 55 votes, finding 39 respondents (71%) who believed student athletes should be able to profit off of their own likenesses, 12 respondents (22%) who believed student athletes should not be able to profit off of their own likenesses, and 4 (7%) who did not know. The majority of respondents do see issues with the current regulations placed on student athletes, voting in favor of paying student athletes.

The issue is not with the recruiting process, but with the expectation that student athletes should receive nothing for their talents during their time in college. Students athletes should not be receiving bribes to attend certain universities and the NCAA will have to regulate sponsorships for many of the student athletes, but the current laws the association has in place hurt student athletes. The current regulations of the NCAA expand too far into the lives of student athletes, allowing agents like Christian Dawkins to bribe students to go to the universities of his choosing. Maybe student athletes should not be paid for their likenesses, but the current system in place is corrupting the idea of the student athlete.

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